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(Before Professor Jacobsen, the Annual Professor of the Baghdad School for 1953-54, went out to Iraq to take part in the excavation of Nippur, in which the Baghdad School is now sharing, a moderate sum had been appropriated to enable him to make a survey of ancient mounds in Southern Mesopotamia. Prof. Jacobsen is eminently qualified to make such a survey, since he has for a long time collected geographic facts as reported in ancient Sumerian literature. He was assisted in the survey by Dr. Vaughn Crawford, our Fellow, and had the cordial cooperation of the Department of Antiquities which sent along Mr. Fuad Safar, the well-known excavator, and Mr. Ahmed Mahdi, the local inspector of antiquities. They drove around in a jeep for two weeks and had a signal success. The vivid letter in which Prof. Jacobsen reports to the Director is worth being communicated to the members and friends of the Schools in extenso. A.G.)

Archaeology is normally dominated by the idea of the vertical. As an excavation proceeds downwards through stratum after stratum the excavator is intent upon what overlies what, and it is the relative vertical position of the remains that give him clues to his key concept: sequence in time. But another, a "lateral", kind of archaeology is also possible. By ranging over the surface of ancient inhabited areas noting the relative positions of mounds, dating them -- or rather the period of their last occupancy -- by observing the pottery on their surface, it is possible to draw valid conclusions concerning the limits, duration, and the basic structural lines of the human settlement of the region as a whole. The aim of such "lateral" archaeology can be no less than the reconstruction of the ancient topographical scene upon which history moved and by which history was in so many essentials determined.

The second part of the program of the Baghdad School for 1953-54 was planned as an attempt at such "lateral" archaeology. The goal set was to determine -- within limits imposed by time and funds available -- the major structural lines of the settlement in Sumer in Sumerian times, to identify the probable course of rivers and important canals underlying and shaping that structure, and to establish whenever possible the position and identity of the more important ancient political and economic centers. In every particular our study on the ground was to go hand in hand with information derived from the ancient written sources themselves.

It will be clear, as it became clear to us -- at times exasperatingly so -- that the two weeks we had at our disposal were totally inadequate for the careful and thorough study which would have been desirable. We had to concentrate on the broad lines of the picture, roughing it out in outline without being able to fill in the details which would give it precision and, in many instances, certainty. Even so, it is our hope that our results -- preliminary as they are -- may show the fruitfulness of the approach and serve to stimulate further research along these lines.

Our little expedition, consisting of Dr. Crawford and myself, met in Baghdad in the beginning of November. Discussing our plans with the Director General of the

Department of Antiquities, Dr. Najj al Asil, we were delighted to find that the Department looked with particular interest on investigations of the kind we had in mind and had in fact for some time contemplated a similar undertaking. It therefore seemed natural that we should join forces and the Department delegated to the expedition Mr. Fuad Safar, Director of Excavations, and Mr. Ahmed Mahdi, Inspector of Antiquities in the Nasiriyeh Liwa. This meant a very considerable strengthening of our assets, for Fuad Safar's knowledge of the country and its archaeological problems through all periods is unrivalled, and Ahmed Mahdi's talent for solving practical questions of routes, provisioning, and quartering, gave the expedition a mobility far superior to anything we could have hoped to achieve on our own.

Our equipment was light; it consisted essentially of a Jeep with trailer, a plane table with an open-sight alidade and compass, a set of large-scale maps, two large metal containers for drinking water, sleeping bags and cots. With this Crawford, I, and our excellent driver Khalaf, drove down to Nasiriyeh to join Fuad Safar and Ahmed Mahdi. In the following weeks we toured the country to the north using as our base successively Refa'i, Shatra, Dawayeh, and Nasiriyeh itself. In most of these places we found accommodation in the local officials' clubs and wherever we went we enjoyed the most unstinted help and support from the local civil authorities. On our drives into the desert we mostly had a Police-Jeep as escort to give us the protection of a second car; for in the places far from human habitations to which our trips took us a breakdown of the car might easily have been quite inconvenient had we been alone. And the possibility of a breakdown was ever present, since the ground we traversed is one peculiarly rough and treacherous. The region around Jokha is full of shifting sand dunes, and the ground, where it is exposed, is cut up and uneven, vaguely suggesting by its black color and sharp contours a landscape on the Moon. To the South the desert -- flooded yearly -- is pitted with deep holes that are often half concealed by withered vegetation. In the cultivation watercourses, earthwalls, and old hardened plough-land necessitate frequent detours and many tricky descents and ascents across deep dry ditches. The Jeep proved itself here, as it later did in soft mud, but it took careful driving not to wreck it, and our bones got well rattled on every trip.

On the whole we had luck with the weather. The days we visited the Jokha area were calm with no wind, so we escaped sandstorms; and only toward the end did short but heavy rains, which turned the desert into soft mud, impede our movements noticeably. Fortunately, however, in the days after the rain, we were able to make our visits to the mounds by boat, so we were not forced to idleness. One of the mounds thus visited was al Hibba, of which more below, and that trip was truly an unforgettable one. Not only because of the very satisfactory results at al Hibba, but because of the beauty of the scenery on the way out, and especially back. We traveled in a slim graceful boat of ancient type, in fact the very image of the boat model found in the royal cemetery at Ur, lying low on the water. In the stern the boatman dipped his punting pole, walked three paces forward bringing his weight to bear on it, and thus, in unending rhythmic repetition, forced the boat forward. Behind us rose a nearly full moon, before us was the reddening evening sky against which palm trees, the reed huts of villages on the banks, and a few stray buffaloes, made black silhouettes as if they were the reliefs of the Uruk period come to life once more; it was as if a word might break the magic and make it all disappear.

The scholarly results of these many and varied trips -- as far as they can be summarized at this stage -- would seem to be in the main two: We were able to establish the existence of a consistent line of ancient occupation running from the north down through Jokha (ancient Urma) and, veering west at Tell Madinah, through Senkereh, ancient Larsa. This line, largely unknown before, unquestionably marks the course of a major ancient canal feeding from the Euphrates. A similar line of occupation, also representing a canal, was established as running from Telloh (ancient Girsu) to al Hibba and Zurgul in almost a straight line.

The implications of these findings are not without interest. The Jokha line, which I would tentatively identify with the ancient Ud-Ninki canal (read as Surugal and Iqiangal in later syllabaries), probably comes down from the region around Nippur through Bismayah (Adab) and Tell Jidr; but that section of it has not yet been explored by us. At the point north of Jokha where we first encountered it lies Bseikh which, before the survey, we had tentatively identified as ancient Zabalam. The identification was then established definitely this summer by Mr. Mohammed Ali el Mustafa of the Department of Antiquities, who on a visit to the mound discovered bricks of Hammurabi recording the building of the Inanna temple É-zi-kalam-ma in Zabalam. Such bricks were noted in large number on the site also by us and the identification must be considered to be beyond doubt. Later in the season it is expected that the Department of Antiquities will conduct a short excavation at this site. From Bseikh the line of occupation runs south to Jokha (Umma) and from there to Umm el Aqarib, an imposing mound of Early Dynastic date with the remains of a ziggurat or a temple on a high terrace. It is likely to represent the ancient Ki-anki which we know to have been situated in the vicinity of Umma. Continuing southwards the occupation line goes through Mansuriyeh, another sizeable Early Dynastic town, which may be considered a totally new discovery since it has -- to the best of my knowledge -- not been visited before and is not recorded on any map. South of Mansuriyeh the line passes through Madinah, a large mound with remains of Isin-Larsa and earlier periods. Here Dr. Crawford spotted, in dumps left from robber-diggings, fragments of inscribed cones. They bid fair to be part of the find of Entemena-cones recording the building of the temple É-mush in Bad-tibira, which came on the market in the late 1930's. Until we can compare the remnants of signs left on our fragments with the complete Entemena inscription the identification of al Madinah with Bad-tibira must, however, remain uncertain. From Madinah the occupation line veers west over Able, a large mound seemingly abandoned in the Isin-Larsa or Old-Babylonian period; and from there it goes to Senkerah, ancient Larsa. It is possible that it may be connected later with a line of Cassite and earlier mounds running down toward Ur which we also investigated.

Branching off from the Jokha line of settlement at the section Bseikh-Madinah and running in south-easterly direction is our other line or "belt" of settlement. This other belt can, from Telloh down to Zurghul, with certainty be identified as the settlement along the ancient "Canal that goes to Nina," which is perhaps the same canal that elsewhere is called the "Sirara canal." From inscriptions of Urukagina we know that the "mouth" or intake of the "Canal that goes to Nina" was at Telloh (Girsu), but whether it fed there from a canal from the Tigris or the Euphrates is not clear. Unfortunately rain prevented us from exploring the region involved. Along this canal lay, according to the ancient texts, Girsu, the temple É-ba-gara, and Nina with the temple Sirara. We were able to identify É-ba-gara with certainty as the high elevations in the center of al Hibba. This elevation covers, to judge from the surface indications, a temple terrace or ziggurat surrounded by a large temple oval with very heavy walls. Here we discovered an inscribed brick with a new inscription of Gudea recording the construction of the É-ba-gara of Ningirsu. Since Ba-gara, along with a famous temple for Ningirsu's escort Baba and another temple for Gatumdug, the "mother of Lagash", were all situated in Uru-kug according to the great lament for Ur published by Kramer in A S XII, al Hibba must be the ancient Uru-Kug. This identification is supported by an earlier find. Dougherty many years ago picked up on al Hibba an inscribed Gudea brick which records the construction of the temple of Gatumdug in Uru-kug. Curiously enough Dougherty did not draw the conclusion that Uru-kug is al Hibba. It seems likely that his brick was found on the northeastern mound of al Hibba which time did not permit us to reach. The mound of al Hibba is unusually large, more than two miles long and almost a mile wide, much larger than Telloh. To judge from the surface pottery it must have been deserted at the time of Early Dynastic II, with only the sanctuaries surviving into later times. This raises the questions whether Uru-kug which means "The holy city" was not specifically the name of the sacred quarter where

the temples were located and which therefore managed to survive, and whether the city of al Hibba as a whole may not have had yet another name. The most likely candidate, considering Gatumdug's epithet "mother of Lagash" is obviously Lagash; and it would only be natural that the name of the once mighty and flourishing city of al Hibba should survive in the title of the later rulers of Girsu, lending to it of its ancient splendor. The traditional identification of Lagash with Telloh (Girsu) is, in any case, incorrect.

Continuing in a southeasterly direction from al Hibba the line from Telloh reaches Zurghul. Since Gudea, when he sailed on the "Canal that goes to Nina" to ask the goddess Nanshe to explain a puzzling dream he had had, passed through Bagara and continued to Nina, Zurghul should obviously be Nina. It now lies buried under the highest mound on Zurghul, which must cover a ziggurat or a temple on a high platform. As in al Hibba so also in Zurghul the temple is all that seems to have survived into historical times. The surface of the site generally is covered with pottery of periods as remote as those of Uruk and Obeid. The identification of al Hibba and of Zurghul which our survey was able to make gave us great satisfaction, for with these points fixed the general topography of the Lagash region should be capable of considerable clarification.

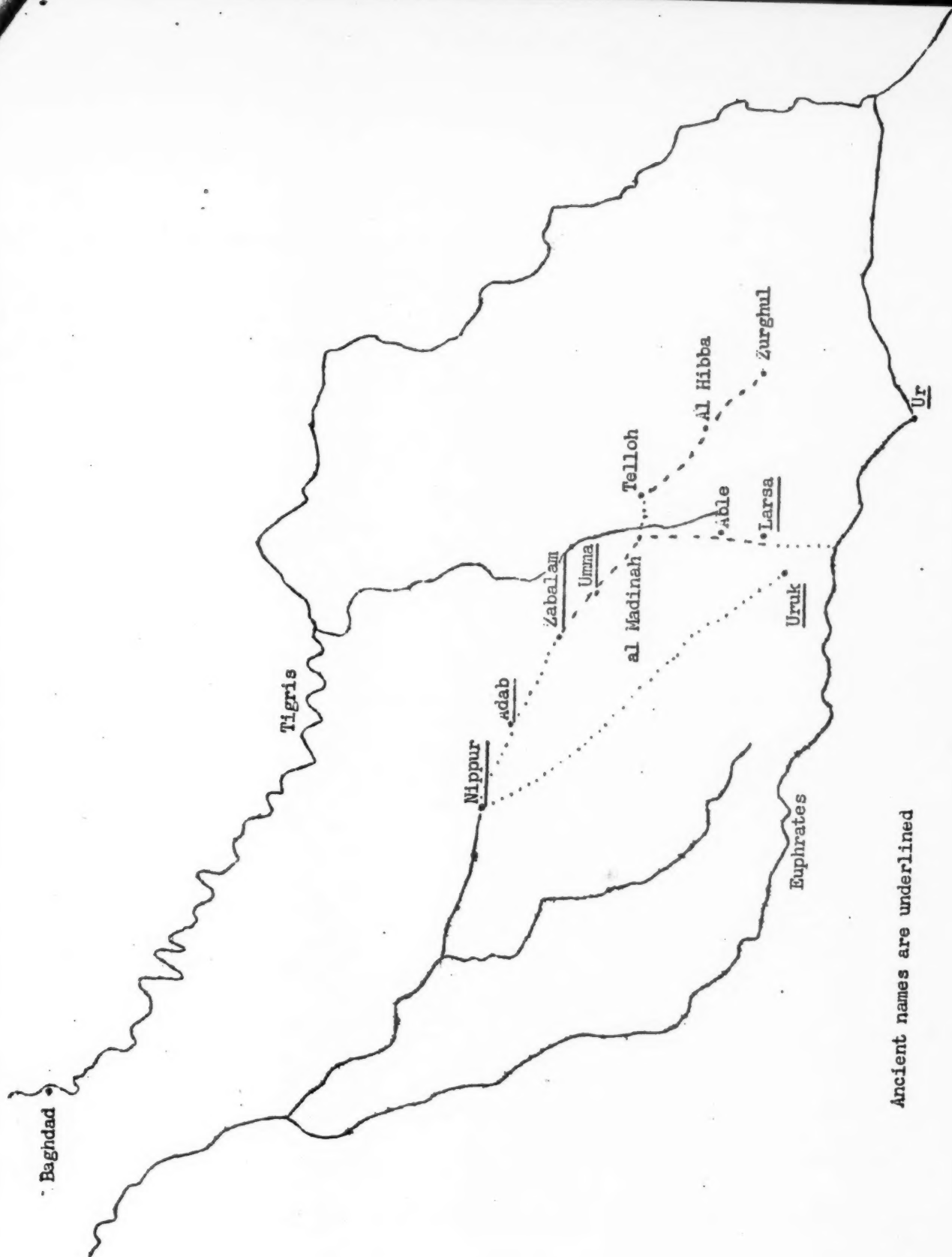
With the establishing of the Jokha and the Telloh-Zurghul lines of occupation the overall pattern of settlement in ancient Sumer begins to emerge. It takes roughly the shape of a capital A with the cross-bar slanted down toward the left. Near the top of the A lies Nippur, along the right leg, down toward the bar are Zabalam, Umma, and Bad-tibira (?). On the bar itself lies Larsa, and on the left leg, just above and below the point where the bar joins it, are Uruk and Ur. The lower part of the right leg is formed by the Girsu-Nina line. The white spaces inside the A were apparently uninhabited desert in ancient time as they largely are today.

The over-all settlement pattern here sketched helps to bring many things in the texts into clearer focus. We may mention as examples the frequent shipping route in the Ur III texts: From Umma to Nippur, from there to Ur, and from Ur back to Umma. It follows essentially the upper triangle of our A or rather the major canals which created the occupation lines. Another interesting example is the campaigns of Sargon and Rimush. These lead south to Uruk and Ur, that is, they follow the left leg of the A. From Ur they move upwards along the cross-bar and down the Lagash region to the sea. From there the return march leads up the right leg of the A over Umma, Zabalam, and Adab.

Of particular interest is the white area inside the upper triangle of the A. This uninhabited region may plausibly be identified as the Edin so frequently mentioned in the Sumerian texts. The word Edin can -- just like the Arabic word Jerirah in present usage -- mean simply desert. But just as Jerirah specifically denotes the region between the Tigris and the Euphrates so Sumerian Edin seems specifically to denote the region just indicated. It was the pasturing ground of the Sumerian shepherds -- as it is of the shepherds of today -- and all the chief centers of the cult of the shepherd-god Dumuzi: Zabalam, Umma, Bad-tibira, and Uruk, lie clustered in a half circle around it. The cultivated area on its southeastern edge toward Telloh was called anciently the "border of the Edin" (Gu-edin-na) and its higher-lying northern part, the "high Edin" (An-edin) was, as we know, near Bseikh (Zabalam). Here again the survey results seem to add new precision to our understanding of the ancient concepts.

Our survey is, of course, still far from its completion. We have not yet explored the upper parts of the A, the Nippur region, or the sections from Nippur to Bismayah (Adab) and Tel Jidr, or from Nippur to Warka (Uruk). We hope, however, to be able to do some of that on week-end trips from the expedition house in Afeq if the work of the excavations leaves us time. There are so many intriguing problems that cry out for solution.

Thorkild Jacobsen, Chicago. Annual Professor of Baghdad School, 1953-54.



Ancient names are underlined